



Office of the President

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July 24, 2006

The Honorable Michael C. Burgess, MD
1721 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Dr. Burgess:

On behalf of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), representing 51,000 physicians and partners in women's health, I am writing to share our strong endorsement of your legislation, the Medicare Physician Payment Reform and Quality Improvement Act of 2006. Thank you for the extraordinary leadership and commitment you've shown in this effort. We look forward to assisting you as this bill moves through the legislative process.

Your bold legislation will ensure that ob-gyns are fairly rewarded for their continued emphasis on high-quality care. In particular, we applaud your leadership to jettison the unworkable Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR) formula and put in place a system that adequately accounts for physician costs and helps ensure access to high-quality care for our patients. As you well know, under the current SGR formula, Medicare physician reimbursement will be cut by 37% through 2015, while practice costs continue to escalate. Elimination of the SGR is necessary to move forward on reporting on performance indicators and we thank you for recognizing this important link in your legislation.

We support your call for valid, evidence-based performance measures that are developed in a transparent process that encourages consensus-building. The measures described in your legislation would be risk-adjusted, allow for physicians to use their clinical judgment to address their patients' unique and individual needs, and help ensure that America's most vulnerable patients continue to have access to needed health care.

Furthermore, thank you for including language in the bill to study the true causes of imaging growth, by modality, with full consideration of the benefits of imaging to patients and of the impact of defensive medicine on imaging growth.

We recognize the challenges in creating a quality improvement program for Medicare that leads us to meaningful clinical measures and improved quality for beneficiaries. And we recognize that more fine-tuning is needed before this new system can be put in place. We applaud your leadership and your commitment to this effort and we look forward to working with you on additional issues that will help ensure that this new system is successful for physicians, patients, and the Medicare program.

Thank you for your willingness to work with ACOG and the medical community in these important discussions. ACOG stands ready to work with you as we embark on this historic change in Medicare.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Laube', with a stylized, cursive script.

Douglas W. Laube, MD, MEd
President